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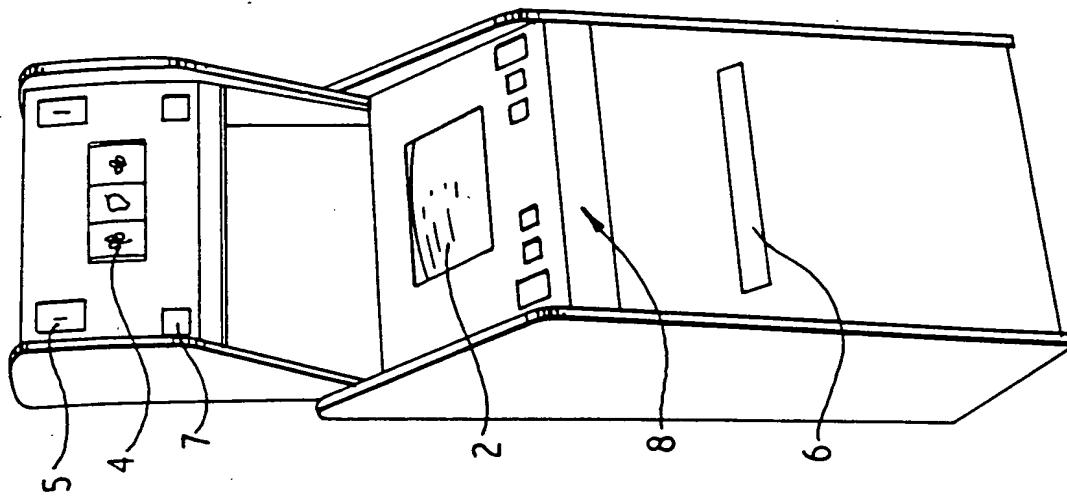


FIG.1.

FIG.2.

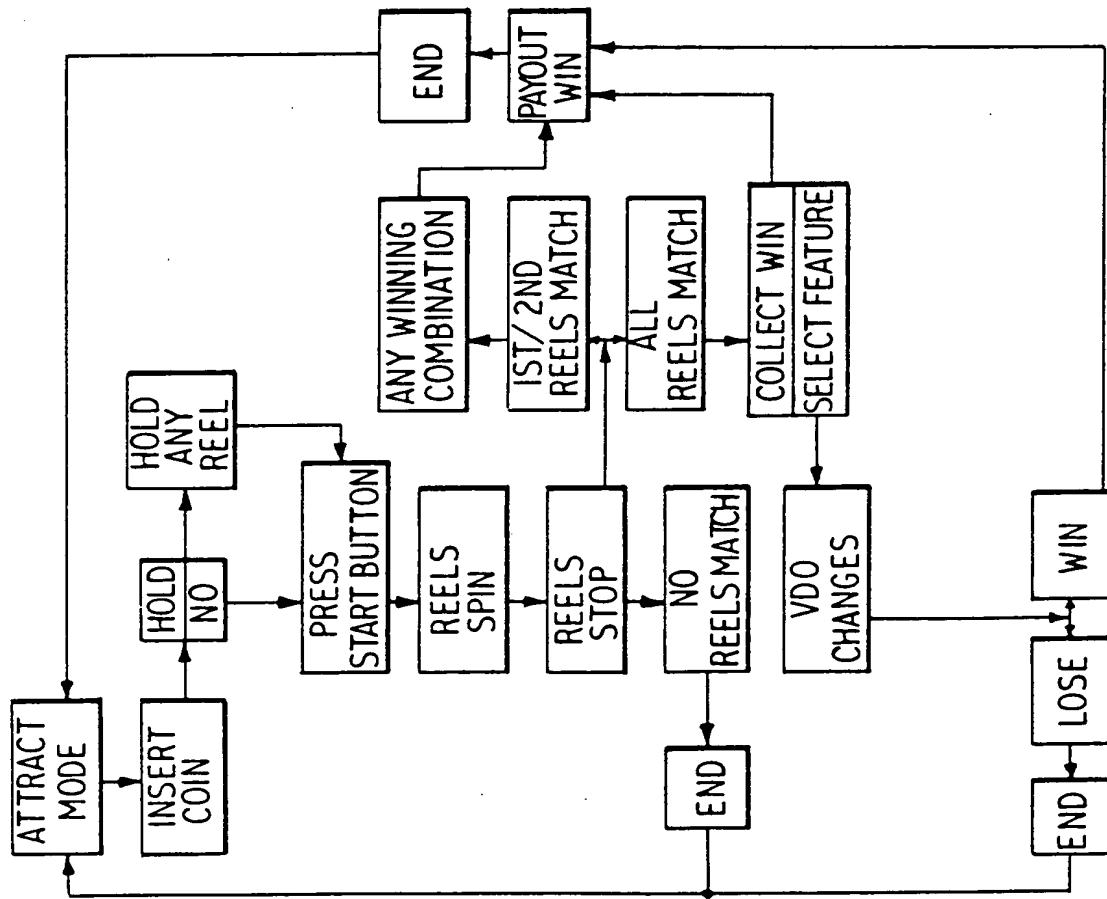
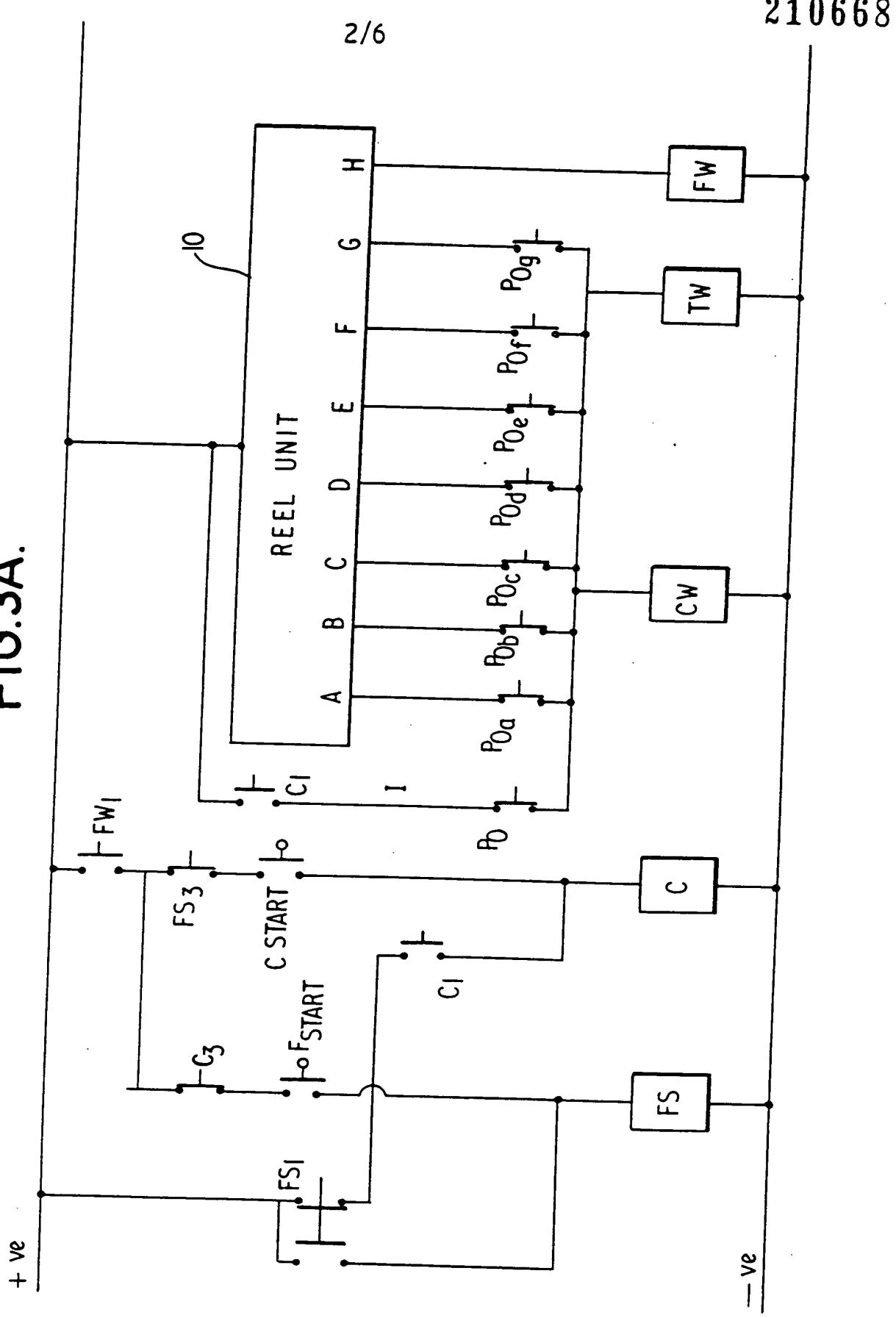


FIG.3A.



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3/6

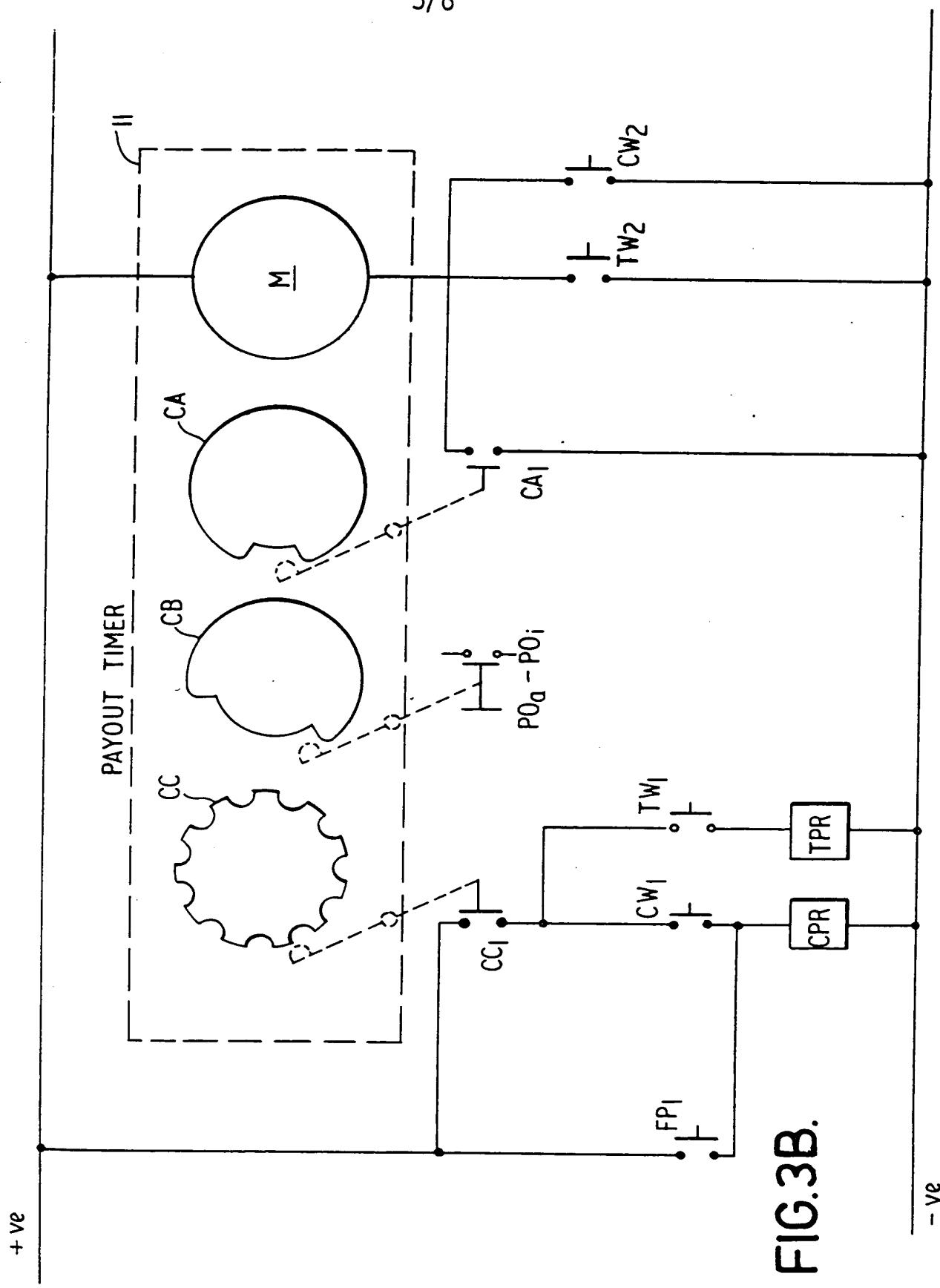


FIG. 3B.

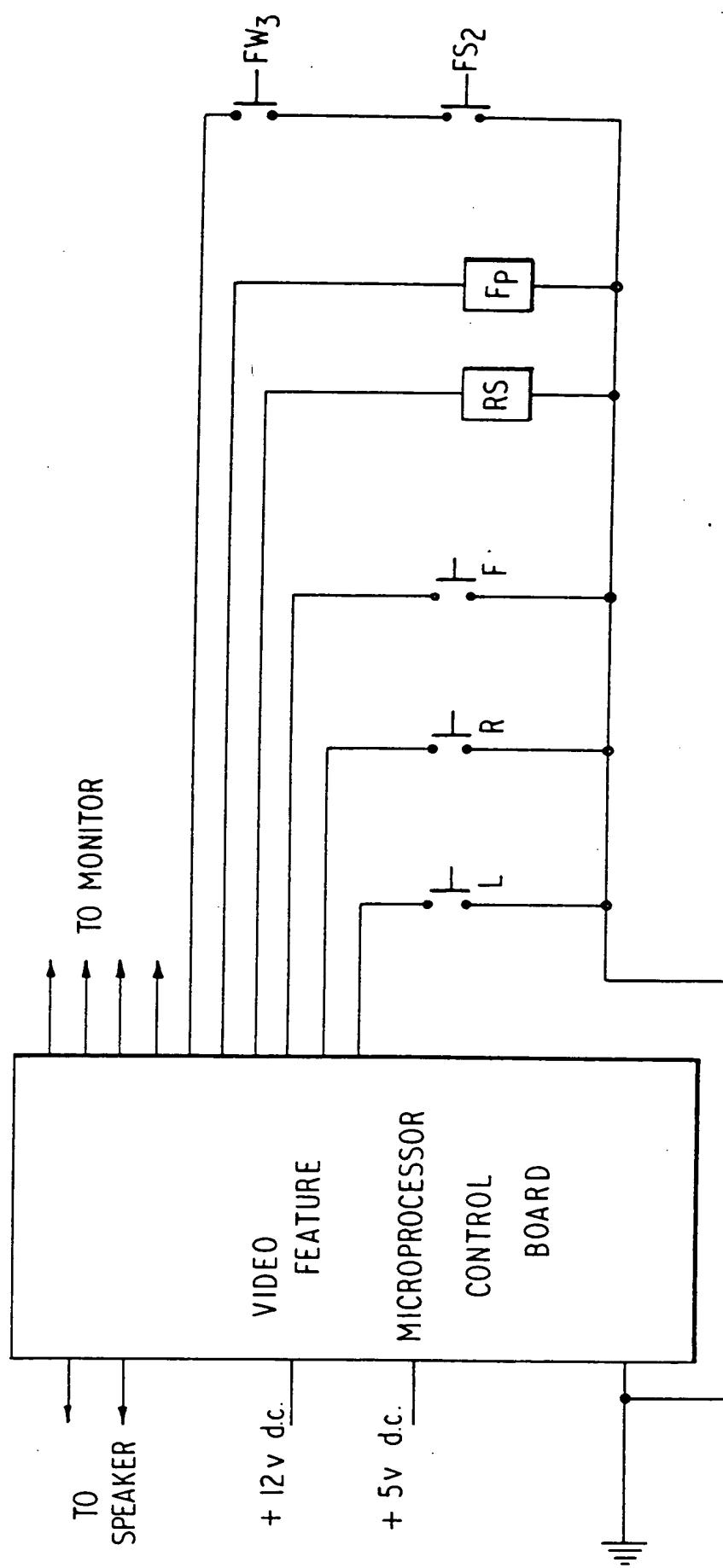


FIG.3C.

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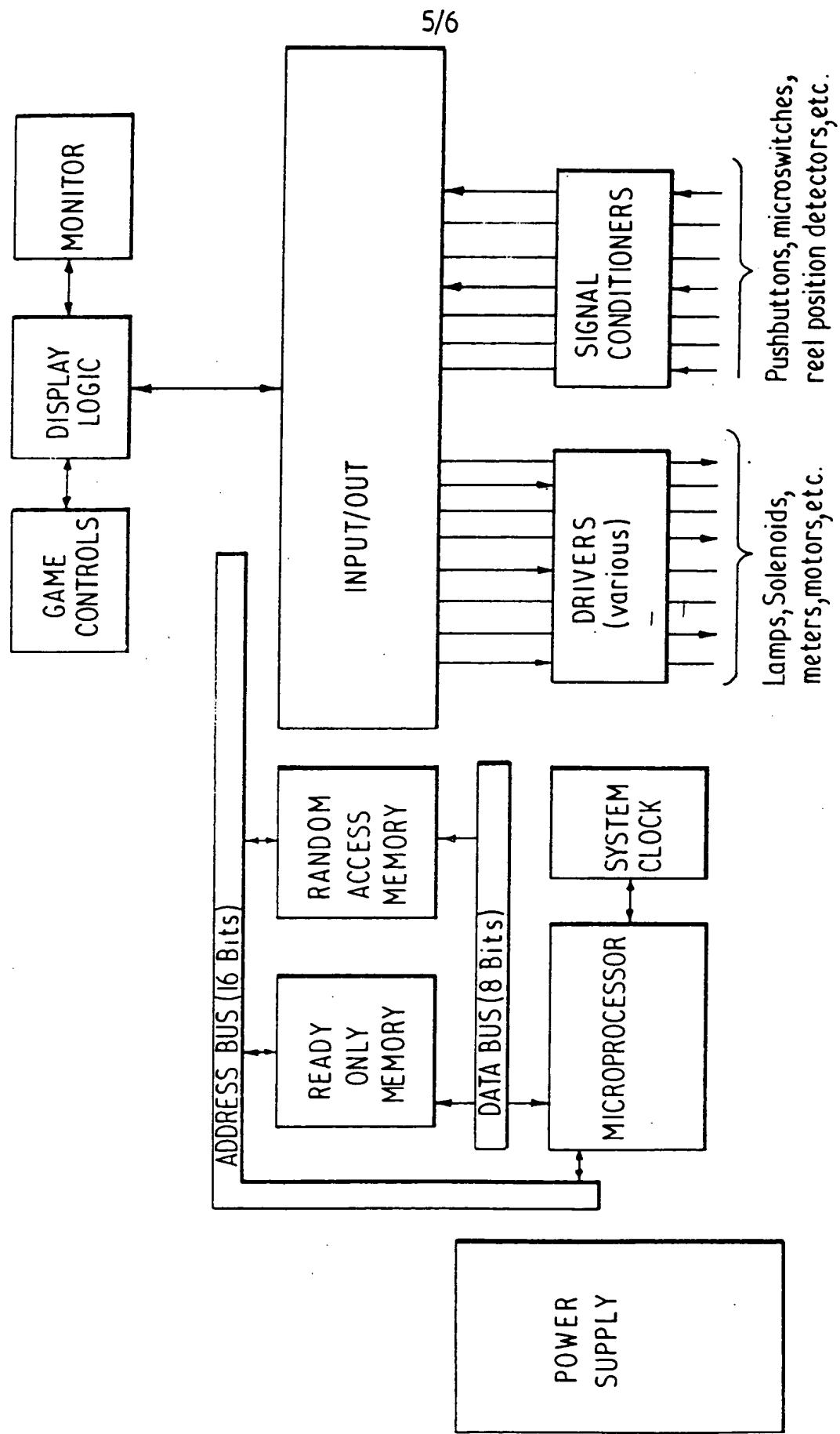


FIG.4.

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6/6

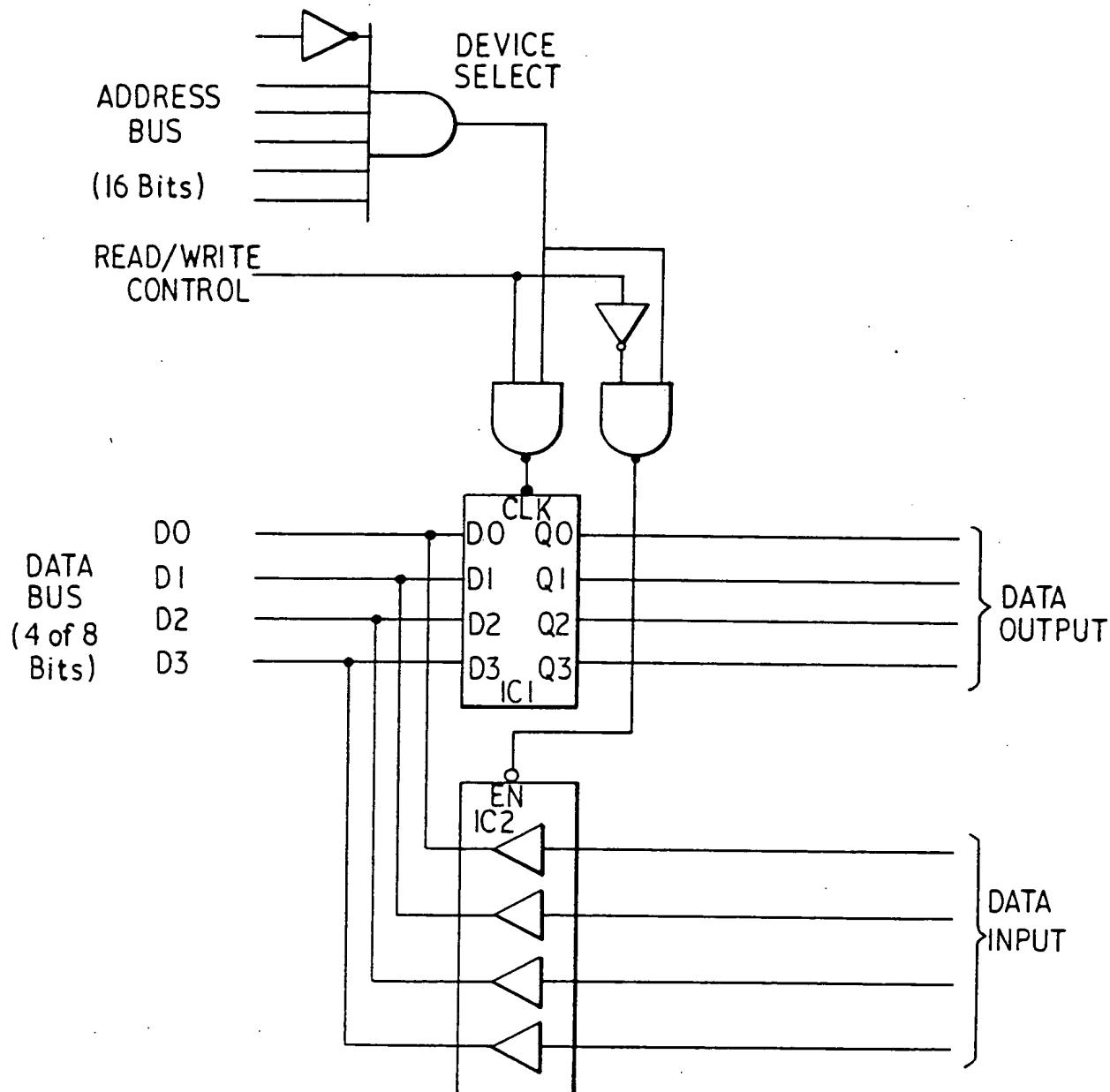


FIG.5.

IMPROVED GAMING OR AMUSEMENT MACHINE

A gaming or amusement machine is known which comprises a group of reels which bear symbols on their peripheral surfaces. The reels are made to spin following the insertion of a coin or token, and the relative positions of the reels when they have all been brought to a halt determines whether a winning event has occurred and, if so, the value of a prize in the form of coins or tokens delivered automatically by the machine. The amusement value of such a machine is limited.

According to the invention there is provided a gaming or amusement machine including a reel mechanism comprising a plurality of rotatable reels carrying symbols, a drive mechanism for rotating the reels during a spinning reel game so that the reel mechanism displays the symbols in different combinations, whereby a user can determine whether a predetermined winning event has occurred by observing the symbols displayed following halting of the reels, and means operable, upon occurrence of a winning event, to perform a win operation, the machine further including a video display screen which is arranged to display information concerning the spinning reel game.

The invention provides a gaming machine of increased amusement value. The video display screen may be used to display information concerning, for example, winning combinations of symbols, and other 5 information concerning the game played using the reel mechanism, for example stakes and values of prizes to be won. The video display may be readily changed, simply by replacing or reprogramming a microprocessor control unit, without the trouble or expense at present 10 involved in replacing a complete machine as is necessary at present following, for example, changes in Government gaming regulations.

The above-mentioned information may be displayed in an initial attract mode of the display screen. Additionally, the screen may operate in a video game mode, which 15 is brought into operation only following a particular winning event on the reels, referred to herein as a feature win, the player being permitted, following a feature win, to initiate operation of the video game or, if the machine 20 is so adapted, to forego such operation and instead draw a cash or token prize. While it is possible, within the context of the present proposal, for the video game to be played for amusement only, it is particularly envisaged that a prize in the form of one or more coins or tokens 25 should also be obtainable following a winning even on the video game.

In more detail, the gaming machine now proposed may comprise a casing designed to display to the player a video screen and a set of three juxtaposed reels which are rotatable about a common axis and whose peripheries bear symbols which may be of the well-known fruit machine type. Slots are provided in the casing through which one or more coins or tokens are inserted to play the machine, and through which coins or tokens won by a player are ejected. When the machine is initially switched on, it enters an attract mode in which the screen displays information such as details of the machine site, the name of the game, instructions for playing the first part of the game, using the spinning reels, and details of the prizes available for winning events on the reels. The information displayed may change at intervals in accordance with the programming of a microprocessor unit with which the machine is also provided. Winning events occur depending upon which symbols align with a "win line" associated with an aperture through which the reels may be viewed, the winning symbols being displayed on the screen while the machine is in the initial attract mode and while the reels are in motion. There may be a number of different winning events, as is conventional with a machine of this type, the possibility being provided of winning any of a number of different sums, depending upon which winning event occurs.

Controls are also provided for playing a video game programmed into the microprocessor unit. This unit may

be programmed such that the skill of the player is used to control the position or movement of an image on the screen so that a winning event in the video game occurs if the player demonstrates sufficient skill. Alternatively, 5 the image produced may be of a random nature, in which case the winning event may be the display of one or more predetermined images in preference to others. The arrangement may be such that the player may select the game to be played from a number of games of one or both 10 types programmed into the microprocessor unit.

The video display unit is arranged to respond to operation of the controls only following a predetermined winning event on the reels, the player being permitted to select 15 either the drawing of a cash or token prize following a feature win on the reels, or the opportunity to stake all or part of the value of this prize against the outcome of a video game.

20 Assuming that the player attracted to the machine inserts a coin or token, a "hold" lamp may now light, giving the player the opportunity to depress control buttons to hold one of the three reels. The player then presses a start button and the reels spin and stop. If no winning event 25 is signified, the game ends and returns to its attract mode. If, say, two reels match, a payout occurs in the normal way. In the event, say, that all three reels match

this winning event may be followed by the display on the video screen of the amount of the win and of instructions that the player should operate the controls to collect either a coin or token, or to stake all or part of the 5 amount won on this first mechanical stage of the game upon a selected video game of skill or chance. Assuming that the player elects the latter, he operates the controls to select the video game and to play it. The selected game may be of a "space invaders" type, in 10 which the controls are operated to move images on the screen, the winning event being the achievement of a score exceeding a predetermined figure, the score being increased or reduced in dependance on the players skill in controlling the images on the screen. Following a 15 winning event, the machine delivers a prize. Alternatively, the microprocessor may permit the video game selected to be of a type such as "pontoon". The video screen displays playing card symbols, the controls being operated by the player to determine how many such 20 cards are displayed. Each card displayed results in the deduction of an amount from the total won on the reels and the balance is displayed on the screen too. The microprocessor unit may also be arranged to act as the dealer and to display on the screen cards dealt to 25 itself. Assuming that the player "sticks" after staking 30p of the winnings on the reels on three cards which total 20 points while the machine scores 19 points, the

player wins and receives winnings of 60p plus change left from the winnings on the reels.

It is possible to construct and arrange a machine in 5 a number of different ways in order to achieve the operations and effect described above. Two examples will now be described with reference to the drawings, wherein:

10 Figure 1 shows the external features of a machine in accordance with the present proposal in a perspective view.

Figure 2 is a diagram to show the sequence of operations 15 performed by the machine.

Figures 3a, 3b and 3c show parts of the circuitry of an electro-mechanical spinning reel type gaming machine, incorporating a video display unit, in order to indicate 20 the inter-relationship between the reel unit and video display unit.

Figure 4 is a block diagram of a microprocessor controlled spinning reel gaming machine, incorporating a video display 25 unit, and

Figure 5 shows an interface unit for the embodiment shown in Figure 4.

Referring to Figure 1, the gaming machine shown therein 5 comprises a casing 1 apertured to reveal the screen 2 of the cathode ray tube of a video display unit and the peripheral surfaces of three reels 4 of a reel unit. The peripheral surfaces of the reels are marked with various symbols, in particular items of fruit, and the 10 aperture through which the reels are visible is marked with a "win line". The casing has slots 5 for the insertion of coins and a tray 6 for the reception of coins and tokens delivered by the machine as prizes. Manual controls 7 are provided for operating the reels 15 and manual controls 8 for the control of a micro-processor control unit of the video display unit. The casing also houses a loudspeaker to which signals are supplied by the microprocessor.

20 Within the casing, but not illustrated, the reels are mounted on a drive shaft, each reel being coupled to the shaft by way of a slip clutch to permit the reels to be halted individually while the shaft continues to rotate. The shaft is drivable by means of an electric 25 motor, and each reel is associated with an index solenoid which, when energised, permits the reel to rotate. Provided that microswitches associated with the coin

— and token slots 5 have responded to the insertion of coins or tokens of sufficient value and activated the machine accordingly for an operation, energisation of the motor circuit may be effected by closing a start push-button 5 switch. Closing this switch also energises the motor of a control cam timer which performs one complete rotation for each operation of the machine and performs overall sequence timing. This arrangement is conventional. Also conventional, and likewise not illustrated, the machine 10 includes a cam timer, which determines by the position in which it comes to rest, whether a "hold" is available for the next operation, in other words, whether the player may hold any of the reels stationary. Provided that this timer indicates the availability of a "hold", 15 hold relays may be energised and latched by closing push-button switches associated with the reels. Each hold relay which is energised opens a normally closed contact in the circuit of an index solenoid to prevent its energisation and spinning of the associated reel.

20

Fast with each reel is a disc formed with a slot for reception of a bar for holding the reel in a fixed position. As the control cam enters three successive predetermined positions, the bars of the three reels are 25 moved into their locking position, the reels being halted in sequence in this manner until when the third and last

reel is halted, the motor driving the reels is de-energised. The reel unit is represented by the box 10 shown in Figure 3 and, when the reels halt, if a winning event occurs, which will depend on the symbols in 5 alignment on the win line, the interengagement of selected studs and wipers on the reels results in the appearance of a signal on a number of outputs (A to H) from the reel unit, depending upon the prize awarded. Thus a signal on line A indicates a prize in cash of 10 20p, on lines B, C and D of cash prizes of 30p, 40p and 50p, respectively and on line E of a cash prize of £1. Signals on lines F and G indicate prizes of tokens valued at £1.50 and £2 respectively. A signal on line H, however, indicates a feature win, namely that the 15 player has won the entitlement to play the video game, or to collect instead a cash prize of, say, 20p in lieu.

The dispensing of the cash and token prizes for normal wins is controlled by a payout timer indicated within 20 the box 11 in Figure 3b. This timer comprises a motor M for driving a cam, or set of cams, with cam tracks, indicated at CA, CB and CC for operating certain micro-switches.

25 Returning to Figure 3a, the output lines A to E from the reel unit 10, are connected to a cash win relay CW, the

lines F and G to a token win relay TW, and the line H to a feature win relay FW. The cash win relay CW may also be energised by a signal on a further line I which bypasses the reel unit, for a purpose which will shortly 5 become clear. The lines A to G and I include the contacts of payout timer microswitches P0a to P0g and P0i.

The cam track CA of payout timer 11 is associated with a contact CA1 which is closed when the cam begins to rotate 10 and closes a circuit through the payout timer motor M until the cam has rotated through one revolution, when the contact CA1 re-opens to terminate the supply to the motor. The cam track CC has a series of evenly distributed notches, the number of which is equal to the maximum cash 15 prize in coins of a suitable value, for example, 10p pieces. During rotation of the cam a contact CC1, associated with the track CC, repeatedly closes and re-opens in the circuit of cash and token payout relays CPR and TPR. The circuits of these relays also include normally open 20 contacts CW1 and TW1, respectively, of the cash and token win relays CW and TW shown in Figure 3. The microswitches P0a and P0i are all closed when the cam timer is in its start position. The cam track CB is so arranged that the contacts P0a to P0e open successively one after the other 25 at predetermined moments of time, and likewise the contacts P0f and P0g in accordance with a separate sequence. The contact P0i is arranged to open at the same time as one of the

contacts POa to POe, depending upon the value of the prize to be given in lieu of the entitlement to play a video game.

5 Each of the relays CW and TW has a normally closed contact in the circuit of the control cam motor (not shown) so that the control cam is halted when a win signal appears on one of the output lines A to G.

Each relay also has a normally open contact CW2, TW2 10 respectively in further circuits for energising the payout cam timer motor M.

Assuming a normal cash win, i.e. not a feature win, a signal appears on one of the output lines A to E. The 15 payout timer is stationary in its start position so that contacts POa to POe are closed. Relay CW is energised and contact CW1 in the circuit of the cash payout relay CPR and CW2 in the circuit of the motor M are closed. The motor is energised and starts to rotate the timer 20 cam or cams. Contact CA1 closes to maintain the supply to the motor despite subsequent opening of contact CW2. Contact CC1 repeatedly closes causing a series of pulses to be supplied to the cash payout relay CPR, a contact of which responds to operate the solenoid of a meter 25 which delivers a 10p coin in response to each pulse which it receives. The cash payout relay is energised each time that the contact CC1 closes but only

so long as the relay CW remains energised and contact CW1 is closed.

Simultaneously, the cam track CB causes the contacts POa 5 to POe to open one after another, the opening of these contacts being synchronised with the operation of the contact CC1. Thus, contact POa opens after contact CC1 has closed twice, contact POb after contact CC1 has closed three times and so on, to de-energise relay CW 10 and prevent the delivery of further coins.

If a token win is indicated by a signal on output line F or G, a meter is operated to deliver the correct number of tokens in exactly the same way as a result of the 15 energisation of relay TW and closing of contacts TW1 and TW2.

In the event however that the symbols aligned with the win line indicate a feature win, a signal appears on the 20 output line H from the reel unit to energise the feature win relay FW. A first normally open contact (not shown) of this relay closes to illuminate a lamp indicating the feature win and informing the player that he may choose between collecting a cash prize or playing the 25 video game. Contact FW1 closes in the circuit of a collect relay C and a feature start relay FS. If the

player elects to take a fixed sum, he closes a switch C_{START} in the circuit of the relay C with the result that contact C1 of this relay closes in line I to energise the cash win relay CW (which has remained un-energised because of the absence of any signal on lines A to E) and initiate operation of the payout cam timer to deliver a prize having a value determined by the length of the part of the cam track CB associated with contact P0i, in the manner described above. At 10 the same time, contact C2 of relay C opens in the circuit of feature start relay FS to prevent use of the video unit. Contact FS1 remains in the position shown so that the relay C is latched following closing of a self-holding contact C3. Should, however, the player 15 choose to play the video game, he closes instead switch F_{START} so resulting in the energising of relay FS since contact C2 remains closed. Contact FS1 picks-up and relay FS latches.

20 Referring now to Figure 3c, the microprocessor control board of the video display unit has a circuit including contacts FW3 and FS2 of the feature win and feature start relays. Following energisation of both relays, these contacts close, signalling the microprocessor 25 to change mode. Accordingly, the attract mode (or a mode entered when the machine was brought into use) is

ended, and a game programme contained in the micro-processor is brought into use. The programme may include the display of information on the screen as to the way of playing the video game, before entering a playing mode in which manually controlled switches L, R and F are used by the player to move an image displayed on the screen to the left and to the right, and to fire images representing projectiles.

10 Because contact FS3 opens in the circuit of the collect relay C, contact C1 opens in line I and relay CW remains de-energised.

The construction of the microprocessor control unit and its incorporation in the video display unit and connection to a loudspeaker as indicated in Figure 3c, together with its programming, is well-known to those skilled in the art and will not be described further herein. In the event that the player wins the video game in accordance with whatever rules are included in the programme, a relay FP in Figure 3c is energised and closes a contact FP1 in the circuit of the cash payout relay CPR shown in Figure 3b to cause a cash prize to be dispensed without involving the payout timer.

25

The circuits associated with the microprocessor control unit may be readily modified to cause changes in

presentation on the screen in response to energisation of the relays CW, CT and FW so that the fact of cash, token or feature wins is indicated visually on the screen.

5

Following the completion of a full sequence of operation on the machine, the control timer is returned to its start position as a result of a signal produced by closing of a further contact (not shown) of the collect 10 relay C or the return of the payout timer to its home position, or the closing of a contact of a reset relay RS in the circuit of the video feature control board. Just before the control timer reaches its start position, all latched relays are released, and the machine 15 re-enters the attract mode.

Of course, a practical construction of the machine requires circuits and components further to those described and illustrated for the purpose of explaining the inter- 20 relationship between the reel and the video unit. These further circuits and components will be familiar to those skilled in the mechanical and video gaming machine arts.

25 The sequence of operations is illustrated in Figure 2, wherein it is assumed that the matching of symbols on

the first and second reels leads to a normal cash or token win, while the matching of all reels leads to a feature win.

5 The electro-mechanical game unit may be controlled by a microprocessor control unit of a type conventionally available which is re-programmed to give additional input and output controls as shown in Figure 4, which is a block diagram showing the basic machine controller, 10 together with the display logic driven by input/output (I/O) circuitry.

Most microprocessor controllers have spare input and output capabilities and this may be used for communication 15 with the display logic as indicated. If, however, no spare capacity exists it is necessary to extend the input/output as follows.

An unused device address is selected and used to control 20 an interface with latched outputs these being offered to the data input through a similar unit on the display logic. A circuit diagram of the unit including a quad latch IC1 and three state buffer IC2 is shown in Figure 5. The data received back is strobed onto the 25 data bus when the read/write control line is low and the correct device address is present on the address bus. Therefore, data is input and output in a similar manner

to storing and retrieving data from a memory location.

In use, the microprocessor controls the game functions according to the data stored in its permanent memory, 5 performing electronically the tasks described above in relation to electro-mechanical controllers. However, when a feature win is detected and the player elects to play the video game, a signal is output to the video logic, this being in the form of setting one of, 10 for example, four data bits. The display, which will be in its attract mode, will frequently sample these data lines and when the appropriate bit is set, will commence the video game. At the conclusion of the game, information as to the amount to be paid out 15 will be written on the video's quad output latch.

This will be detected by the gaming control which, whilst the video game was being played, would continually sample its input interface to await the arrival of payout information. The appropriate prize is then 20 output and when complete the gaming control writes zeros into its four bit latch as an acknowledgement that payment is complete and will revert to its normal function. The video logic should now detect the absence of the initializing and write zeros into its 25 output register, after which it reverts to the attract mode, the sequence being complete.

A single microprocessor control unit may be used to combine both the spinning reel and video logic into one unit as only one function is required at a time.

5 Although as described herein the reels rotate about a common axis in conventional fruit machine manner, and have the symbols of the peripheral surfaces of, the reels, it will be appreciated that it is possible for the reels to be replaced by discs, for example,
10 which rotate about respective parallel axes.

Reference is hereby directed to British Patent Application No. 8105918 from which this present application is divided

CLAIMS:

1. A gaming or amusement machine including a reel mechanism comprising a plurality of rotatable reels carrying symbols, a drive mechanism for rotating the reels during a spinning reel game so that the reel mechanism displays the symbols in different combinations, whereby a user can determine whether a predetermined winning event has occurred by observing the symbols displayed following halting of the reels, and means operable, upon occurrence of a winning event, to perform a win operation, the machine further including a video display screen which is arranged to display information concerning the spinning reel game.

2. A machine as claimed in claim 1, wherein said information comprises symbols which the reel mechanism can display.

3. A machine as claimed in claim 2, wherein the video display screen is operable to display said symbols in combinations which are displayed by the reel mechanism upon occurrence of winning events.

4. A machine as claimed in claim 3, wherein said video display screen is arranged to display said symbols

in said combinations before the reels are rotated, and to maintain said display while the reels are rotating.

5 5. A machine as claimed in any preceding claim, wherein said video display screen is operable in a first mode to display said information, and is further operable to display different information in a second mode.

10

6. A machine as claimed in claim 5, wherein said video display screen is operable in said second mode to display game information to permit the user to play a further game.

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7. A machine as claimed in claim 6, including means for causing said video display screen to enter said second mode upon occurrence of a winning event.

20

8. A machine as claimed in claim 7, including means whereby a user can, upon occurrence of a winning event, select between the dispensing of a prize or the initiation of said further game.

9. A machine as claimed in claim 7 or claim 8,
wherein the machine is operable to dispense a prize
if the user wins said further game.

5 10. A machine as claimed in claim 9, when dependent
upon claim 8, wherein the prize which is dispensed upon
selection thereof by actuating said user operable means
is of a smaller value than that dispensed following
winning of the further game by the user.

10

11. A machine as claimed in any one of claims 6
to 10, wherein said video display screen is operable
in said second mode to display simulated playing cards.

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12. A machine as claimed in any preceding claim,
including an electronic unit for generating a signal
which produces the display on the video display screen,
the electronic unit being reprogrammable to vary the
display.

The text of the specification has been reproduced by photocopying the applicants original typescript. It may contain a few amendments which are difficult to read. The original typescript containing these amendments may be inspected on the premises of the Patent Office